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The methods used in the construction of a tourism development strategy in the regions. A case study of Poland¹

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of the analysis of the tourism development strategies in the Polish regions in terms of the methods used for their preparation. Based on the conducted examination of the documents, a comparison was made between the identified methods and the methods most often used in foresight projects, through their representation on the so-called foresight diamond. The weaknesses in the selection of methods in the process of developing a tourism development strategy in the regions compared to the foresight projects were also pointed out.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is the determinant of the development of many regions. Because of this fact, countries take measures to create conditions for further growth in this sector, wherein it is strongly dependent on the phenomena occurring both within the region and beyond. This forces the regional decision-makers to use the available tools of strategic management, aimed at building the competitive advantages of tourist reception regions.

Strategic management is a complex, continuous management process, set at formulation and implementation of effective strategies conducive to a higher degree of compatibility of the organization and its environment and the

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achievement of strategic objectives (Griffin, 1996). In contrast, strategy is the identification of the major, long-term goals and the adoption of such courses of action, as well as the allocation of resources that are necessary to achieve the objectives (Chandler, 1962).

In practice, it is impossible to prepare an original strategy enabling the achievement of a competitive advantage, solely through the correct application of the standard methods and procedures. The main problem is not the procedure for the activities and analyses, but the persons preparing the strategy. In the absence of policy makers, on whose initiative effective approaches will be developed, and who in fact will implement them, all the methods and tools will remain useless.

The answer to the problems regarding the creation of the development strategy are the foresight studies, used successfully in the implementation of the prospective long-term projects in relation to a variety of areas and industries (since recently in Poland, and since the seventies of the twentieth century around the world). Grupp and Linstone (1999) define foresight as an equivalent of a set of systematic efforts to look into the future and make the most efficient choice. At the same time, foresight assumes that there is no one single future. Depending on the actions or lack of actions in the present, many variants of the future are possible, but only one of them will occur.

The results of foresight projects illustrate the effects of the work of high-level experts and the feelings of a broad group of stakeholders. Therefore, they constitute a different class of documents than the expert opinions and government strategic documents (Matusiak, Kuciński, & Gryzik, 2009). Strategic Foresight integrates the ideas, procedures and the instruments of trend research, research on the future, in order to support the strategic decision-making processes and initiate the planning and innovative activities (Müller, 2008).

The objectives of foresight are implemented using a variety of tools and methods, both strictly scientific and heuristic, based on expert intuition. The iterative nature of the process enables the foresight to be treated as a permanent approach in thinking about the future and act as a useful tool when attempting to manage it (Magruk & Jańczuk, 2009).

The research processes adopted in the foresight studies conducted so far assume the utilization of a sequence of methods of various types (Nazarko, 2013; Ejdyś, 2013). The catalogue of research methods used in foresight studies is extensive, and consists of methods and techniques borrowed from management, as well as those developed by the futurologists (Kononiuk & Magruk, 2008). The methods adopted for the foresight studies constitute a large group, from which the most commonly used methods have been placed by Popper (2008) on the so-called foresight diamond, reflecting their basic typology. They have been divided according to the following criteria: nature (quantitative, qualitative and indirect); ability to collect and process information, expertise, creativity and interaction (Fig. 1).

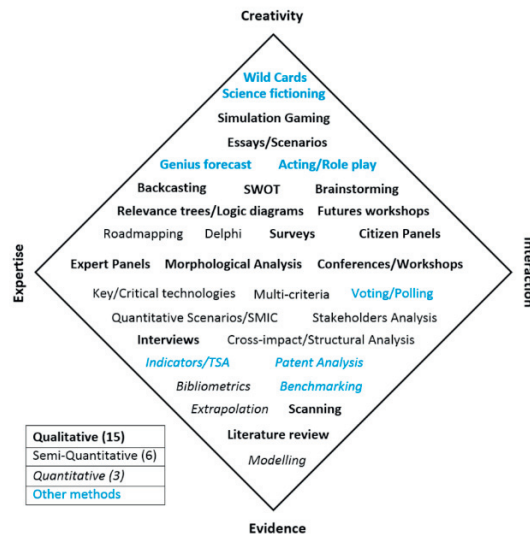


Figure 1. Foresight diamond - the methods used in foresight projects
 Source: Popper, R. (2008). How Are Foresight Methods Selected? *Foresight*, 10/6, 62-89.

2. Method

The main objective of this work was to identify the methods used to create tourism development strategies in Polish regions. 16 strategic documents for the development of tourism in the regions (provinces) of Poland have been analysed. All of them are currently valid and pursued strategies. After identifying the methods, they were compared with the methods most commonly used in the implementation of foresight projects. The so-called "foresight diamond" was used for this purpose, into the framework of which the methods that were used in the process of creating tourism development strategies in Poland were entered.

3. Results

As is clear from the conducted research, most regions (15) have a developed strategy for tourism development. In contrast, Lublin Voivodeship only has a tourist audit, which was developed to determine the position of the region in context of the future design of the directions of tourism development. The methods used in the process of strategy development in the different regions (voivodeships) are presented in the framework of the so-called "foresight diamond" (Fig. 2). Of the 24 methods, most often used in foresight projects, in the process of creating the development strategies, only 10 were used (9 belonging to the group of qualitative and quantitative group 1).

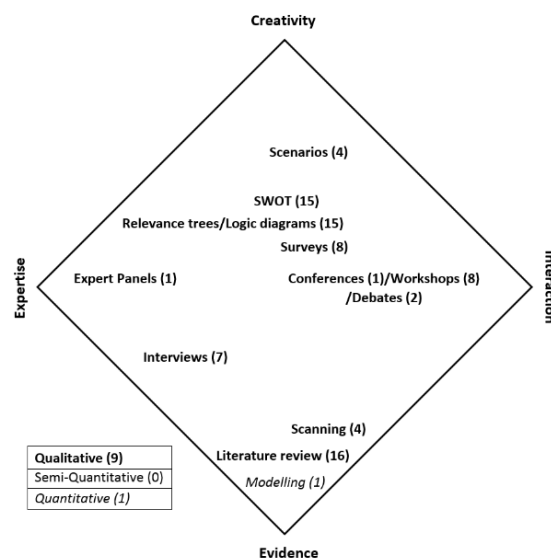


Figure 2. Methods used in the process of creating strategies for tourism development in Poland

Source: own study based on: Popper, R. (2008). How Are Foresight Methods Selected? *Foresight*, 10/6, 62-89.

In all strategies, the methodology was based on a tourism audit, using the method of literature study (16), and in 4 cases, also scanning of the environment. Subsequently, a SWOT analysis was performed (15), as well as determining strategic priorities, objectives and directions (15). Only in four strategies, the scenarios of development were further developed – mainly optimistic and pessimistic. The methods supporting the development of strategies were the interviews with the representatives of administration, entrepreneurs in the tourism sector and non-governmental organizations (7), as well as surveys among tourists and tourist industry (8). Only in the case of one of the strategies, the method of expert panels was used. In the course of formulating the strategic provisions, also workshops (8) debates (2) and conferences (1) were held, to which the representatives of the tourism industry in the specified region had been invited. Unfortunately, in many cases, they failed to attract a considerable number of participants.

4. Conclusions

Based on the executed analysis, it was found that:

1. the range of methods used in building tourism development strategies in Polish regions is narrow, and the diagram of the operationalization process is repeatable in most cases;
2. the methods used in building the tourism development strategies in the regions, take into account the low level of participation of the stakeholders in the process to a very low extent;
3. the methods used in the preparation of strategic documents for the development of tourism in the region are mostly focused on documenting the knowledge and interactions, and to a much lesser extent on expertise and creativity, which directly indicates the lack of participation in the process of strategy development of a wide range of stakeholders in the tourism sector;
4. the application of the methods used in foresight projects could support the strategic planning process through substantive engagement of stakeholders: entrepreneurs, scientists, local authorities, NGOs, politicians and the media;
5. the common development of the social vision for the future of tourism development by the interested parties would constitute an impulse to complete the pursued objectives;
6. the application of the methods used in foresight projects would enable the broadly understood creation of tourism, looking to the future and making the most efficient choice, instead of the anticipation and management used so far;
7. the use of a logical combination of the selected methods from a wide range of foresight methods would facilitate the search for the priority areas of tourism development, significant, for example, from the point of view of smart specialization of the region;
8. the application of foresight methods would enable the assessment of the consequences of the current actions and decisions, and would help to detect problems before they occur and avoid them. It would also enable the development of visions of the future, the most promising of which, implemented with the involvement of the authorities, entrepreneurs and the public would have a chance to bring the highest economic and social benefits for the region. The main findings and conclusions should be summarised in the discussion section.

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